

THE CONSTRUCTIVE SIDE OF BUDDHISM.

[**Masatoshi Gensen Mori** is a son of Japan whose recent publication *Buddhism and Faith* has attracted considerable attention. We sympathize with the theme of his article and find ourselves in general agreement with his views.

The ethics preached by Gautama Buddha are not the exclusive property of his declared followers, since they are the soul of all religions and as such belong to all nations; yet while in other religions ritualism and dogma have supplanted these ethical principles, in Buddhism they are still alive. It is for this reason among others, that we would specially recommend a study of Buddhism, the sublime teachings of which can be practised even to-day, in our age of competition and selfishness, as the writer well points out. In fact our modern civilization which worships the physical man, and encourages the pursuit of mortal pleasures and comforts, has much to learn from Buddhism. Much of the struggle for existence and the fever of modern life could be alleviated were we to acquire, at least in a measure, the Buddhists' detachment from that which is fleeting and evanescent, by seeking refuge in that which is eternal. It is interesting to read this article in the light of the following quotation from Madame Blavatsky's *Theosophical Glossary*:

"His (Gautama's) is the only *absolutely bloodless* religion among all the existing religions; tolerant and liberal, teaching universal compassion and charity, love and self-sacrifice, poverty and contentment with one's lot, whatever it may be. No persecutions, and enforcement of faith by fire and sword, have ever disgraced it. No thunder-and-lightning-vomiting god has interfered with its chaste commandments; and if the simple, humane and philosophical code of daily life left to us by the greatest Man-Reformer ever known should ever come to be adopted by mankind at large, then indeed an era of bliss and peace would dawn on Humanity."—Eds.]

A well-known Buddhist philosopher of Tokyo recently warned his countrymen against the ever-growing tendency to look outside oneself for the means of gratifying one's desires or minimizing the sorrows of life. Now this tendency is not new in Japan, any more than in other countries, but obviously it has been accentuated by the introduction of Occidental civilization. Whereas in former times men were taught to resign themselves to the effects of their *Karma*, many of us now-a-days think it at once our right and our duty to combat these evils as best we can, without seriously reflecting upon their causes. "Extinguish the flames of your own mind, and you will feel cool and refreshed in the midst of a great fire," says a Dhyana teacher. Not so a modern Japanese imbued with Western ideas. He has a scorn for those who apparently submit meekly to their fate. Science, he holds, has pointed out the way to the conquest of Nature. He shrinks from nothing in his endeavour to alter his surroundings to suit himself, but he remains ever dissatisfied with his lot. And no wonder, for in his eagerness to conquer the external world, he has forgotten how to control himself.

Now we may succeed to some extent in reducing the physical discomfort caused by climatic and other conditions. Medicine and sanitation may minimize disease and prolong life. Production may be increased and distribution equalized by efficient scientific methods; and it must be admitted that these improvements, or legitimate advances, in material civilization are to be welcomed, provided that they are calculated to liberate human energies for more enduring pursuits.